

The last thing anyone in the job market needs is some more bad news; and yet a recent survey has delivered just that. However, we say that employers and employees alike should approach the situation with resilience and a touch of optimism for the future.

The Institute of Economic Research's recent survey of business opinion, revealed that 32% of employers are looking to reduce staff numbers in the coming three months. In September a net 7 per cent of firms said they expected to reduce staff numbers in the coming three months. In the event a net 21 per cent did.

The global financial crisis has created an extreme level of uncertainty within the business community and that is making many employers nervous about making long-term strategic decisions in relation to hiring and talent management.

Many employers have become overawed by the situation as they try to balance the need to hold onto quality staff with the pressure to improve productivity, while at the same time reducing costs. This struggle to walk the line between the two has seen many employers shift to a passive, wait-and-see approach, opting to bunker down until the market improves.

This is not necessarily the best move for the long-term success of a company. Smart employers will see the downturn as an opportunity to position their business in a way that will ensure it can weather the current situation but then respond quickly when the market improves.

HR Consult is currently working with some clients that have heeded the advice of a long-term strategy and are taking the economic turmoil as an opportunity to test their resolve and adapt to the challenges at hand. Like all organisations they are feeling the pressure. But the economic situation is going to be a temporary one and they have realised that they must find better ways of serving their business and serving their customers in the hard times.

" It's in the downturn that we must plan for the upturn. We're still looking and planning for when things will get better and we'll have the go-ahead and the money to go again. The downturn is also testing us in our creativity," was how one client has described it.

It's food for thought that all businesses would be well advised to consider if they wish to stay afloat and on the mark throughout the economic crisis and thereafter.